

Fulfilling a Promise

Age 14
Language Arts Short Story

~After~

I had just been accepted into heaven and it was *beautiful*. I was *finally* in the place I so desperately wanted to enter. It was nothing like they described in movies, stories, or documentaries on TV. There were so many people—miles and miles of people, each doing different things. There were children laughing, men eating, women drinking, even animals playing. It was such a beautiful sight and I never wanted to leave it. Then I remembered the promise I had made. The promise I *swore* I'd keep.

~Before~

‘I think heaven is whatever you want it to be,’ my father told me.

‘What do *you* want it to be?’ I asked him. ‘What’s *your* heaven like?’ I was sitting on my hospital bed, minutes away from death.

‘Heaven is a beautiful place,’ he replied. ‘A place where everyone can be happy—a place—’ He could not continue. ‘Promise me something,’ he whispered to me, tears trickling down his face.

‘Anything,’ I whispered back—I loved my father.

‘Promise me that you’ll visit me sometime?’ he pleaded. ‘In my dreams, let me know what your heaven is like.’ I smiled and slowly nodded.

‘I promise,’ I whispered, and then I fell asleep.

~After~

‘Hello?’ I called to the people in front of me, hoping that someone would notice and help. ‘Excuse me?’

I slowly walked through the crowds of people leaving the golden gates to fade away behind me. ‘I need to speak with... *Him*,’ I yelled. ‘Does *anybody* know where I can find Him?’

A younger boy perhaps two years younger than me, heard my calls and came to me with a question.

‘What’s your name? My name’s Ben—I’ve been here all my life!’ He puffed his chest proudly as though waiting for applause after a much-anticipated performance had finally been revealed.

‘Do you think you can help me?’ I asked him, and he giggled.

‘Of course! What do you need?’

‘I need to speak with God,’ he told me.

‘Who?’ he asked in confusion.

‘God!’ I replied. ‘Surely, you must have heard of him!’

‘Nope,’ he smiled. ‘There’s nobody by the name of God in *this* heaven. Sorry I guess I *can’t* help you.’ I slowly nodded and understood that I’d have to continue this journey alone.

Gradually, I walked back to the gate that previously invited me in. *Where can I find Him*, I thought. *He must be here someplace!* I rested my hands around the cylindrical rods of the magnificently unique gate, and called for the three gatekeepers who had, earlier, let me in.

‘Hello!’ I called and, at first, nobody answered. ‘*Hello!*’

‘Yes, my child?’ a voice called, and a lady by the name of Mary appeared on the other side with a patient smile resting above her chin.

‘I have a problem,’ I wept, ‘and I need your help.’

‘What’s wrong, my dear?’ she asked me, slightly furrowing her brows.

‘I’ve made a promise that I can’t seem to keep. I promised my father, before I came to this place, that I

would tell him of what I'd see. I need to tell him of all the people! I need to tell everything! I need to tell him now!' Mary merely nodded her head, and lowered herself to my height. 'I need to speak with God,' I told her. '*Please!*'

For a split second, she looked at the ground—almost as though she bore bad news—but then she looked back up at me with a smile and asked, 'What is your idea of heaven?' I looked away and took a deep breath, choking over my cries.

'Wh—at?' I ummed for a second, wiping my tears on my sleeve, and then answered. 'Heaven is a place where people go when they die. Only the g-good people, and *not* the bad. Heaven is the end of all our w-worries. Heaven is the b-best place a person can go!'

'Does your heaven have a God?' she asked me, and I nodded, shocked at how I could have forgotten to mention Him; scared that it might have been too late.

'My heaven has a God in it,' I replied. I *believed* it. Mary pointed behind me, and so I turned around. There he was, only I couldn't see Him.

‘There He is,’ she told me. All I could see were the people.

‘I—I don’t—I *can’t* see Him! Where is He?’ I asked in despair. ‘I need to speak with Him, *now*.’

‘God is—everywhere,’ she told me, and I fell silent. I turned around and watched. Everybody was happy.

‘But—I need help,’ I told her. ‘I *need* to tell my father of heaven—I promised!’ Mary shook her head in return.

‘You can’t,’ I felt my heart skip a few beats. The two words that I prayed never to hear—not in heaven—had, just then, been uttered in front of me. My tears appeared once more and I screamed. Everybody fell silent—everybody turned to watch the young bald boy cry.

‘*WHY?*’ I screeched. ‘*WHY NOT?*’

‘Because,’ she replied peacefully, ‘heaven is whatever you want it to be... and your father needs to discover *his* heaven on his own—just like you did.’ I looked her deep in the eyes, and reached my arms out through the bars. She hugged me—supported me—made

me feel better, and then she quietly sang me a lullaby as the chattering began to arise once more.

‘Everything’s going to be okay,’ she told me, and I gently fell asleep.

*Sleepy-time child, the sandman is here,
He’s sprinkling sand in your eyes.
Your guardian angel will stay very near,
‘Til you wake with the morning sunrise.
~ Al Pittman*